



TESTIMONY ON HB 515 – Rep. William Glaser
House Education
February 9, 2007

Chairman Jore and members of the committee:

For the record, I am Pete Carparelli, Executive Director of the Montana Quality Education Coalition.

I appear as a proponent of HB 515 sponsored by Representative Glaser.

As you know, Montana Quality Education Coalition seeks adequate stable on-going funding for public K – 12 schools as defined in 20-9-309 MCA passed by the MT Legislature in 2005 and as assured by the Montana Constitution. In previous testimony I have shared with you the goals of MQEC and its approach to proposed legislation related to the funding of Montana's public elementary and secondary schools. Although I will not repeat that message again today, I will submit it as part of my written testimony.

MQEC is evaluating legislation proposed during the 2007 Legislature, and will support such legislation that adequately addresses one or more of the requirements of 20-9-309 MCA and meets the state's constitutional obligation to adequately fund our public K-12 school system. It has also provided information in the form of the report, Estimating the Cost of an Adequate Education in Montana, to assist the Legislative and Executive branches in their considerations of proposed legislation dealing with Montana's public elementary and secondary schools.

MQEC honors the Court's recognition of the legislature's right to phase in any remedy over time, and MQEC will support legislation as part of a phase-in

remedy that explicitly prescribes a cost-based approach and leads to a defined funding goal over a specified period of time.

MQEC will oppose legislation that is not consistent with 20-9-309 MCA and the Court's decision.

Today, MQEC supports passage of HB 515 that is before you because it believes that this bill is a 21st century way of addressing section (2) (e) of 20-9-309 MCA providing for "distance learning technologies associated with meeting the accreditation standards." We see it as bringing a very real quality component of instructional delivery to our schools, especially to our small, rural and isolated schools that can access curricula otherwise not available to them.

We reserve our full-hearted support, however, because we see this funding as yet another piecemeal approach to adequate funding. One section of current law (20-9-306 MCA) that HB 515 amends still provides a definition of "basic entitlement" that is questionable as to its adequacy. We prefer to see improvements in the basic entitlements, and reduction of the discrepancy between per elementary and per secondary entitlements. We prefer to see improvements in the Quality Educator Payments, At-risk, Indian Achievement Gap, and Indian Education for All. We prefer to see increases in the State's contribution to Base aid. Once these entitlements are improved to an adequate level, districts could choose whether distance delivered coursework is to be one of their delivery strategies.

Short of this more comprehensive and articulated approach to improvements in funding, HB 515 does address one component of the State's definition of quality, so we support it to that extent

Thank you for the opportunity to address you this afternoon. Thank you, Rep. Glaser for bringing HB 515 to the Legislature.